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TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

THERE are some points of practice in religious worship, nearly similar in all the states of the Union, so far as my experience extends, and which it has been sometimes thought might be altered advantageously. As the slightest innovation in these concerns, is apt to startle even the strongest minds, I hope that the following suggestions may be candidly appreciated, and shewn to be expedient or otherwise, after mature consideration. The first alteration I would propose, is in the hours of worship in the afternoon. It would be better that this service should commence at a later hour. The common time of dining in most of our cities, is between two and three o'clock. On Sunday the dinner is served one or two hours sooner. The moment after rising from the repast, we repair to church. In summer especially, the lassitude which follows is most unfriendly to devotion, and I have known some individuals, who have absented themselves from the second attendance, rather than incur the risk of violating the solemnity of religious worship, by that feeling of drowsiness and languor from which very few are exempt. The fatigue and effort to a clergyman, who officiates twice after so short an interval, must be greater than it would be, if the second meeting were later in the day, and when in summer the extreme heat had subsided.

In the next place, are two discourses necessary, or, all circumstances considered, advantageous? The introduction of protestantism in abolishing almost all the ceremonies of religion, left a vacuum, which was advantageously filled by moral and doctrinal discourses, to excite and enlighten those who adhered to its tenets. The number of these has varied among different sects, according to their circumstances and character. The general practice, however, for which perhaps no other reason, than custom, can be assigned, has made two sermons requisite in the regular congregations of different protestant sects. Yet if there be not some particular virtue in this number, why is it better than three, which are still delivered in many meetings; or even the practice of the proselyting sects, who operate on their hearers by a mechanical process of exhaustion. Is not

delivering two sermons a week, a greater task, than most or even any clergyman can well perform, in addition to other parochial duties? Would not a single discourse, which, it may reasonably be inferred, would be composed with more care and ability, produce more good than is now usually done by two? Does not the multiplicity of sermons, in some measure, weaken their effect?

Allow me then to suggest, for the consideration of the clergy and all reflecting men, whether the time of the second service may not be changed for the better, so that it should become what it was originally intended to be, an evening service; that the middle of the day, so oppressive in summer, should be left to meditation and repose. That the sermon should be delivered in the morning; and the evening service, commencing towards sunset, should have the vacancy of the sermon supplied by larger portions of the Scriptures, and of sacred musick. The hour would be more propitious to devotion, the closing of the day with religious exercises would be more natural and decorous, than the present arrangement, by which, in summer time particularly, the day is most unequally divided, and the services inconveniently crowded together.

A LAYMAN.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

It is surprising, that in a country where the spirit of improvement and enterprise is so strong, the establishment of mail and other coaches, should be so miserably wanting in every thing, for the comfort of the traveller, which is still more remarkable, because there being no post-horses on the roads, almost all our journeying is in these vehicles. Hitherto nothing seems to have been aimed at but speed, and the rapidity with which the mail is transported, equals that of the most improved countries in Europe. Yet no change has been made in the coaches. In Massachusetts they are in a degree better than in other states: but, when you get out of this state, they are mere inconvenient waggon, in their primitive construction. Certainly, the great roads from Portland to New-York, and some of the roads in Pennsylvania, will admit of better carriages.

In addition to more comfortable carriages, an arrangement for transmitting small parcels is exceedingly wanted. In England, this is found to be a lucrative branch of the business; every town has a coach office, where parcels are booked, and are transmitted daily to all parts of the kingdom, for a trifling charge; every package is delivered immediately, and very often the persons, to whom they are addressed, receive them as early as they would a letter by the mail. Such an appendage attached to any of our lines of coaches, would not fail of meeting with encouragement, as every person has experienced the difficulty of transmitting small packages from one city to another.

A FRIEND TO IMPROVEMENT.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

THE introduction and rapid extension of merino sheep, in this country, forms one of the most important features of our rural economy. I have heard the numbers of full-bred and half-bred now in the United States, very differently estimated. A correct idea of the actual number might be useful in many respects. I should be much obliged to any person, who would give to the publick through your journal, a calculation of the present numbers of these, and if he has the necessary data, of other kinds of sheep now in the country.

X. Y.

Brooklyn.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

IT would much oblige one of your subscribers, if some of your correspondents would state in your journal, the principal features, and the present practice of the laws respecting Tythingmen, in the different states of the Union, where such laws exist. At present, from the best information I have been able to obtain, they seem to be only partially carried into effect in particular districts. I have heard of some curious cases of oppression by these "Fa-miliars." It seems most extraordinary, that this most

odious branch of police should exist in a few towns only. Is the right to stop travellers on the high-way of the state vested in each particular town? or is this a general law, under which separate towns may act as they choose. Many reasons may be given why the publick attention should be called to these laws; either to remedy partial oppression, or in equity and policy, to propose a system of common restraint. If the majority are of opinion, that *force* can serve the purposes of religion, that men will be more constant and devout in their attendance on publick worship from being *compelled*, let these regulations be universally enforced, and doubtless some useful additions might be made from a celebrated code now obsolete. The King of Spain has restored the Inquisition, and it is not for us to say he has not done wisely. There is a restless spirit in man never to be contented. The Sunday, in no part of the world, is at this moment so rationally, devoutly, and decorously observed, as it is in a greater part of the eastern, and in many districts of the middle states. Those who are still desirous of greater perfection, without regarding the propensities of human nature, would do well to recollect a celebrated Italian epitaph on a man who took physick in health: *Stavo bene, ma per star meglio, sto qui. I was well, but to be better, I am here.* C. G.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

IT would gratify my curiosity, and perhaps many of your readers, if any of your correspondents could furnish a list complete, or only partial, of the plays that have been produced in this country, and performed in the different theatres of the United States, particularizing the number of nights they were played, and whether they have been printed. S. D.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

IT has been the policy of all nations to encourage their citizens, to the performance of great actions, by some species of honourable distinction. The nature of these has varied with the genius of their governments. In modern

Europe, whose institutions are principally monarchical, titles of different degrees, chiefly hereditary, are the most common mode of rewarding brilliant or useful services, and one of the main supports of this form of government. The nations of antiquity whose institutions were less complicated, the Romans for instance, rewarded illustrious citizens with titles which were only an additional name, and were not hereditary. Names thus given accord strictly with the spirit of republics. The lovers of economy will not object to making use of this portion of the "cheap defence" of nations : and more generous and enlarged minds would gladly decree to a statesman, or hero, a surname, which would only be a glorious distinction to him, and not being hereditary as in monarchies, would not make his descendants burthensome to the publick. Such a name should be given only by a unanimous or nearly unanimous vote of both houses of Congress. Thus, for example, *Perry Erie, Mc Donough Champlain, Jackson Louisiana.*

SCIPIO AFRICANUS.

Cambridge.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

PRESUMING that your pages will be open to any hints on the great questions of publick manners and morality, I propose occasionally to send you brief communications on these topics. One of the most prominent and growing evils of society, seems to me to be the love of scandal. This may in a great degree be attributed to the stagnation and absence of customary, active employment in our cities, during the recent war. The return of peace, among other advantages, may afford such employment for every one in their own concerns, as may force them to relinquish in part the gratuitous interest they have taken in those of others. In the mean time we may gradually acquire more generous habits, and attain to manly feelings by degrees ; and in imitation of the tolerant policy of a certain court, where it was one of the rules of an assembly, that no lady should get drunk before nine o'clock ; it might be proposed as an incipient step, that no circle of gentlemen should stoop to converse about such mean, insignificant details of occurrences, in private families, as kitchen maids would despise relating.

What I wish here to repress, is not censoriousness, but only that idle gossip and mischievous tattling, the natural occupation of ignoble minds in a state of idleness. The breed of censorious people are by far too useful to be destroyed ; like the turkey buzzards of Carolina, who, devouring the carrion of the cities, preserve them from pestilence ; so this class is equally useful and pleasing, and by preying on all the moral offences of society, serve to keep it from contamination. Voltaire has remarked, "that it is difficult to know how to act with the publick ; there is no way of pleasing it during one's life time, but by being profoundly "unfortunate." Yet this will not always do ; the terriers of scandal will not give up the scent while life remains, but pursue the victim into the most lonely and obscure retreats, in which wretchedness can seek to shelter itself in obscurity and oblivion. I will not date the place from whence I write this letter ; I fear it will apply to many. Happy and singular indeed would be the condition of that country, which was degraded by only one scandal-loving city.

CHARLES SURFACE.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

THE events of the last thirty years furnish an inexhaustible theme for moralists, historians, and statesmen. The crumbling of ancient systems, the decomposition of civil society, the propagation of extravagant theories, the rashness of new experiments, and the destruction of visionary hopes, have produced many elaborate essays, and educed from human intellect, numerous consummate specimens of splendid eloquence. Nor can such topicks be exhausted, while philosophers possess the power of perception, combination and analysis, to develope, or the talent of speaking to convince, or the art of writing to demonstrate, the inevitable tendency of rash and innovating propositions, by which the simple are confounded, and the wise baffled. I have not leisure, nor has your journal space sufficient to dilate these ideas to their full extent. It is as remote from my inclination as from my capacity, to make the attempt. Wishing to avoid a general and endless view of the subject, I descend at once to a few of its particular bearings, not on

human society at large, but some portions of it in particular parts of certain countries.

As my design from this preface must be sufficiently evident, allow me to ask if the violation of decorum, the want of etiquette, the rusticity of manners in this generation, must not be a source of exquisite regret and mortification to those, who have seen the last? What idea can the unfortunate young people of the present day have of ancient polish and refinement? So extensive is the deterioration of society, so deleterious the consequences of abandoning established systems, that even the well-intentioned know not how to conduct themselves. This degradation does not exist in Europe alone, this country also deplores its extent. What are the manners of the present day? The presence among us thirty-five years ago, of the most accomplished noblemen of the Court of Versailles, in adding a slight polish to the simplicity and frankness of our habits, formed a most pleasing and perfect system of behaviour. Since that period every thing has been new modelled, and our manners left to choke themselves with their own wild growth, without any pruning, till they have shot into the utmost exuberance of rudeness. Once in a while a vestige may be perceived of better times, some well-bred antique that shrinks from "modern degeneracy;" and when seen in society recalls to mind the insulated Corinthian columns, that are still erect amid the desolation of Palmyra, or the deserted environs of the Forum. When one sees an assembly in the present day, straggling groupes of young men with whiskered cheeks, and wild, uncurled, unpowdered, bewildered locks, and the innocent animated imitations of the Medicean Venus, with their thousand cork-screw ringlets and muslin robes roaming among them, it brings to the fancy a flock of merino lambs in a field of scrub oaks. If it comports with the plan of your journal, I wish, while any trace remains, to attempt restoring a little of former urbanity and elegance. For this purpose, I will in the present letter give a few hints that may be easily observed; hereafter, if this essay should prove acceptable, I will attempt to reform more complicated evils.

No gentleman is to lean back so as to support his chair on its hind legs, except in his own room: in a parlour with a small circle it borders on extreme familiarity, and in a

drawing room filled with company, it betokens a complete want of respect for society. Besides, it weakens the chairs, and with perseverance, infallibly makes a hole in the carpet.

There have been circles of society, where it would have been considered impertinent, for a gentleman to sit cross-legged; but as I do not aim at impossibilities, I shall say nothing on this point: no gentleman, however, must allow himself to sit in the company of others in the following position. On the edge of the chair, one leg over the other, parallel to, and leaning on the back of the chair. A position which will at once be understood by any of your readers who have seen a vessel aground, left by the sea laying on one side.

No gentleman at dinner or tea time is to take out a silk handkerchief, that has been in his pocket two or three days, and lay it over his knee; if in eating toast, he is not furnished with a napkin to wipe his fingers, he may make use of a fresh cambrick one, if he has it, but he had better adopt the feline mode of cleansing his paws, than the practice here prohibited.

If a gentleman be requested to carve a turkey, or any other fowl, he is not to proceed as if it were a character, and cut it completely up: but take off a piece as it is wanted, and not keep a company waiting, and leave the whole bird piece-meal, when perhaps no one will taste it. N. B. This rule does not apply to a table d'hôte, unless the carver is willing to sacrifice himself, like Curtius, to fill the gulph of appetite around him.

ARISTIPPUS.

Providence.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

I WISH to propose an undertaking to the publick, which I hope some of our learned societies or liberal individuals may be disposed to prosecute. This is to explore those ancient entrenchments that are found in the western states, more effectually than has yet been done. All the speculations upon them, that I have seen, are founded on an examination of their superficial state. I have never heard of any attempt to search below the surface. It is very probable,

if a trench five or six feet in depth were dug across them in different directions, or if some of the mounds near them were opened, that some remnants of tools, of warlike or domestic instruments, fragments of earthen vessels, &c. &c. might be discovered, that would at once decide the problem, by whom they were constructed. It is impossible that the people who are able to construct such extensive works, should not have possessed a variety of tools, and utensils of various descriptions; and it is extremely probable that fragments at least of these might be found: if a civilized people had any thing to do with them, coins might perhaps be discovered. The expense of a very thorough investigation would be trifling. Five or six labourers skilfully directed for a week, would at least be sufficient to shew whether any light could be thrown on the origin of these antiquities, by making excavations. Perhaps the Antiquarian Society recently established here, may think this proposal worth their attention; or that the Historical Society would add to the valuable services they have rendered to the publick, by directing an effort of this nature to be made.

Boston.

A. B.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

THERE is now living in Gardiner, on Kennebeck River, a gentleman about 81 years old, whose vision exhibits the following curious phenomena.—Until he had passed his 79th year, his eyes had gradually undergone the change common to persons of an advanced age,—requiring the objects of vision to be carried more and more distant as life progressed. About two years since, his sight grew obscure, in respect to objects at a distance, and required them to be brought nearer his eyes, until at the present time, he can read but with difficulty, and only with the letters within 3 or 4 inches of them. At the distance of 15 or 20 feet, he is unable to distinguish his most intimate acquaintances. Yet at the distance of 50 or 60 rods, he sees with tolerable accuracy, so as to tell a man from a woman, or a horse from an ox, as correctly as most persons.

I have not been able to discover, that there was any intervention of more distinct vision, between that which was too remote and that which approached too near the eye.

A severe attack of fever, which happened a year ago, appeared to hasten the change very considerably.

His other faculties, except a slight deafness of long standing, are more than usually perfect, for his time of life. His muscular strength and activity are such as to enable him to walk 4 or 5 miles from home, and return the same day.

E. H.

FOR THE NORTH-AMERICAN JOURNAL.

THE following curious English advertisement appeared in the *Times* and *Morning Chronicle* in June, 1813.

ONE who has lived, thus far, for others, would fain do, at length though late, a little for himself. A created being, more trespassed upon than the Advertiser, never, perhaps, had existence. By his efforts, two millions and a half of property, distributed among more than fifteen hundred owners, has been bettered full 50 per cent: whilst the honest factor for this great concern (shining in borrowed robes, and appropriating to himself a series of documents addressed to Parliament, to Government, and to publick Boards, the whole composed by the Advertiser,) never darkened the doors of the latter, from the moment his purpose was answered—silent scorn being the only emotion which pride would permit in the author of the improvement. By the Advertiser's means, high distinctions have been attained by individuals, who, after reiterated failure on their own parts, had relinquished all hope—the benefitted never troubling the benefactor, with a single question as to the state of his treasury. A healer of ill bloods and composer of quarrels, the Advertiser's rule has ever been (bating the egotism) to do, in all cases, the most good and least harm (the circle of the obliged comprehending no less a personage than the present Ruler of this Empire:) yet, is the history of the returns he has met with a practical compendium of all that was ever said or sung of "short memory succeeding service." After wasting a rather lengthened career in the uses and abuses of other people, the Advertiser finds himself, at not a very early epoch, in a plight of fortune which is, indeed, very susceptible of melioration.